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AUTHOR Leaver, Betty Lou
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ABSTRACT

A discussion of foreign language-related jobs available in federal government agencies describes the extent and types of opportunities and suggests methods to use in preparing and applying for them. There are many diverse opportunities for foreign language students in the federal government, but many are hard to locate from the outside, rarely advertised, and may seem hidden to students. Most are civil service jobs, and some paid and unpaid internships also exist. The Civil Service and Excepted Service systems and their benefits are briefly described. Common requirements and restrictions of government service are noted, including travel, moving expenses, security clearances, and language proficiency requirements. The application process is outlined, and approaches to use to improve the chances of being hired are suggested. The addresses and telephone numbers of 40 federal agencies employing foreign language specialists and the types of jobs available are included. (MSE)

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GOVERNMENT JOBS AND CAREERS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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by Betty Lou Leaver
Foreign Service Institute
U. S. Department of State

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[Note: The following paper is not intended as a research endeavor but as a requested summary of a workshop presented at the 1986 Youngstown State University Foreign Language Teachers' Conference, the purpose was to help teachers provide guidance to students in search of foreign language careers with the government.]

Job Opportunities. There are many opportunities for foreign language students to find jobs and follow careers within the federal government. In fact, the opportunities are greater and more diverse than most students, teachers, or even counselors realize. The problem is not the availability of the jobs, but the finding of them. Unfortunately, such jobs, while well-known to those who already work in government, are often hard to locate, rarely advertised, and seem "hidden" to most language students in search of them. The key is knowing where to look and how to prepare oneself for these positions.

The types of jobs themselves are quite varied, as the list of agencies at the end of this paper would indicate. They include positions beginning from rates of GS-5 or the equivalent (approx. $14,000/year) to GS-11 (approx. $28,000/year), as well as internships, some paid, some unpaid.

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Paid or not, internships are an excellent way in which to find out more about government positions and government foreign language work, as well as to get to know prospective employers and gain experience in the field. Many of the agencies listed at the end of this paper have summer or year-round internship programs. Readers interested in a particular agency are encouraged to contact the personnel office for that agency to determine whether or not there may be internships available.

Civil Service/Excepted Service. Most readers are somewhat familiar with the Civil Service system. Those who are not can obtain information on the Civil Service system and GS wage scale at any local U. S. government office.

While a number of the agencies below fill foreign language positions from within the Civil Service system, many more do not. Those who do not may hire employees under contract or under the Excepted Service.

Contract positions must be nationally advertised and are usually let for specific, short-term projects. Each of the personnel offices can supply the applicant with information opn the contracting and advertising procedures of that agency.

Jobs in the Excepted Service are calculated on the GG scale which matches dollar-wise the GS scale, but are otherwise quite different from Civil Service jobs. For example, GG employees do not fill competitive positions. That means there is no exam to be taken and the positions will not be filled through the regular Civil Service Commission. That also means the employer does not have

to fill from a list in which persons are granted extra points for veteran status, etc., but can search for the one person with the specific qualifications needed. Excepted Service jobs can resemble very much regular civil service jobs, but they can also be set up to last for specified periods only. These periods are sometimes renewable, sometimes not. Excepted Service jobs sometimes offer benefits similar to the regular Civil Service, such as health insurance and retirement benefits, and sometimes not. Some of the benefits that may be offered with excepted service jobs and will be offered witih civil service jobs include:

retirement (benefits)
savings plan
health insurance
life insurance
sick leave (accumulated at the rate of 4 hours per 80-hour pay period)
annual leave (the amount will vary depending on length of service)

Requirements and restrictions. Service with the government does not come without requirements and some disadvantages. Travel, both domestic and foreign, is often associated with these positions, something that can be considered either a benefit or liability, depending on one's personal point of view. There may be a restriction on becoming involved with party politics. Some jobs may provide no moving expenses and even no expenses for travel to a job interview.

For many positions fingerprints and at least a national agency check will be required. If a security clearance is required, then there may be a long waiting period, as well as many papers to fill out and, possibly, a lie detector test to take.

Language proficiency requirements will differ according to the positions available. Some positions require near-native fluency; some require a minimal knowledge of the language. Since the word "fluent" means many different things to many different people, when job candidiates state that they are "fluent," the term is often meaningless to the would-be employer. Much more meaningful is a proficiency score as derived on a government test or on an ACTFL test. Most government employers looking for personnel with foreign language skills will require a language proficiency test particular to the agency begin applied to. All government employeer subsecribe to the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) descriptions of proficiency, a scale ranging from 0 for no knowledge of the language to 5 for proficiency equivalent to an educated native speaker. These scores are broadly equivalent to ACTFL proficiency scores.

The application process. The application process itself is fairly simple. All positions require that an applicant submit an SF 171 form, the standard form for application for government employment. The form requests personal information, references, employment and education history. While a CV or

resume is rarely required for Civil Service jobs, it is for some excepted service positions

It is often helpful to contact person in charge of the office in which you would like to work to ascertain the status of upcoming openings. Depending on the response received, a resume might be sent or an interview arranged. Even if no work is currently available, an interview will usually guarantee that the resume or SF 171 will trigger recall of the candidate. Interviewed candidates can also increase their chances of being remembered by leaving a resume (and it does no harm to file an SF-171, just in case) and by checking back periodically. Sometimes one employer may have no openings but may know where other openings exist.

Listed below are addresses and telephone numbers for government agencies employing foreign language specialists. Within brackets are indicated the specialties required for those agencies which employ relatively large numbers of foreign language specialists. Some of the agencies hire few language specialists but are included here for informational purposes.

U. S. Department of State
Bureau of Personnel
Office of Recruitment, Examination, and Employment
Washington, D. C. 20520
tel. 703-235-9386
includes:
Foreign Service
Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs
Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Refugee Programs

Language Services Division
Foreign Service Institute
Overseas Schools
{diplomats, translators, interpreters, researchers and analysts, FSI personnel - see below}

for internships:
Executive Director
Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Department of State
Room 6639
Washington, D.C. 20520

Foreign Service Institute
Personnel Office (or request specify language section)
1400 Key Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22209
tel. 703-235-8807
{instructors (must be native speakers), interns, supervisors (PhD usually required), computer foreign language typists, clerical support}

Overseas Schools
Dept. of State
1701 N. Fort Myer Dtrive
Arlington, VA 22209
tel. 702-235-1763
{teachers}

Library of Congress
Library of Congress Employment Office
LM-107
101 Independence Ave., S.E.
Washington, D. C. 20540
tel. 202-287-5627
{division chiefs, catalogers, technicians, foreign law specialists}

for internships:
Foreign Affairs Section
Room LM-315
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20540

U. S. Bureau of Census
Personnel Division
Washington, D. C. 20233
{demographers, economists, researchers, statisticians}

Voice of America
Director of Regional Language Broadcasts
tel. 202-485-8032
{broadcasters, journalists, analysts, writers}

Radio Liberty
Director of Personnel
Suite 1100
1201 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
{broadcasters, journalists, analysts, writers}

Congressional Aides
tel. 212-224-3121 (identify congressman/senator or program)
{area specialists}

Radio Free Europe
Personnel Department
1201 Connecticut Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20036
D-8000 Munich 22
West Germany
{broadcasters, researchers, analysts, writers}

National Security Agency
Office of Recruitment
Office of Civilian Personnel
Fort George G. Meade
MD 20755
{analysts, translators, instructors}

U. S. Army
U. S. Navy
U. S. Air Force
U. S. Marine Corps
including reserve units
Consult local telephone directories.
{instructors, analysts}

4th Psychological Operations Group, US Army
Civilian Personnel Office
Recruitment and Placement
Fort Bragg, NC 28307
{researchers, analysts}

Naval Intelligence Command
4600 Silver Hill Road - NIC-15
Washington, D. C. 20389
{translators, editors, analysts}

National Defense University
Fort McNair
Washington, D. C. 20319
tel. 202-693-1077

National War College
Ft. McNair
Washington, D. C. 20319
tel. 202-693-8384

Army War College
Carlisle Barracks
PA 17013
tel. 717-245-3505

Defense Intelligence College
Washington, D. C.

Federal Bureau of Investigation
consult telephone directory of nearest large city, ask for recruitment office
or: Office of Personnel and Recruitment
Washington, D. C. 20535
tel. 202-324-3000
{national security sepcialists}

Defense Intelligence Agency
Chief, Recruitment Branch
Civilian Personnel Division
Washington, D. C. 20301
tel. 202-545-6700
{analysts}

Central Intelligence Agency
Director of Personnel
Dept. A, Box 1925
Washington, D. C. 20013
tel. 703-351-2028
For local offices, consult telephone directory of nearest large city, ask for recruitment office.
The CIA has an excellent college scholarship program, as well as a Graduate Studies Program (internship).
{analysts}

Foreign Broadcast Information Service
P. O. Box 2604
Washington, D. C. 20013
{translators}

Peace Corps
P-307
Washington, D. C. 20525
tel. 800-424-8580/7080
{a wide variety of specialties}

Defense Language Institute
Civilian Personnel Office
Presidio of Monterey
MOnterey, CA 93940
{instructors; must be near-native speakers}

Office of Special Investigations, USAF
HQ, AFOSI
SPC, Bolling AFB
Washington, D. C. 20332
tel. 202-697-0111
{analysts, translators}

U. S. Joint Publications Research Service
1000 Glebe Road
Arlington, VA 22201
Washington, D. C. 20443
tel. 703-962-3833
{full-time and freelance translators}

Agency for Internation Development
Office of Personnel
Washington, D. C. 20520
includes:
Office of Rural and Institutional Development
Office of Education
Office of International Training
tel. 202-647-29962
{specialists in international education and international development}

Overseas Private Investment Corporation
Office of Personnel and Administration
1129 20th Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20527

Department of Agriculture
Office of Personnel
Washington, D. C. 20250
tel. 202-655-4000

U. S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
320 21st St., N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20451
tel. 212-647-3708
ACDA also has an excellent internship program at the graduate level.
{specialists in foreign affairs, analysts}

U. S. Information Agency
Office of Personnel, Room 534
400 C Street, S. W.
Washington, D. C. 20547
tel. 212-485-8797
{communicators, journalists, diplomats, foreign exchange}

Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Personnel
Washington, D. C. 20460
tel. 202-655-4000

Export-Import Bank of the U. S.
Office of Personnel
Washington, D. C. 20571
tel. 566-2117

Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Personnel
Washington, D. C. 20410
tel. 202-655-4000

Department of Commerce
Office of Personnel
Washington, D. C. 20230
tel. 202-377-2000
{researchers, analysts, specialists in foreign trade, commerce, and economics; some positions overseas}

Defense Mapping Agency
Personnel Office
6500 Brookes Lane
Washington, D. C. 20315
{geographers}

United Nations Information Center
Washington, D. C. 20037
tel. 202-653-6128

World Bank
Office of Personnel
Washington, D. C., 20433
tel. 202-477-1234